

National Forest Service, Forest Plan Revision
Preliminary “Need To Change” January workshops
Public Input Report
Sequoia National Forest Public Workshop
January 28, 2014

Prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy

Contents

Introduction	2
Input by topic area	2
1. Vegetation, resilience, wildlife and fire	3
Refinements.....	3
Clarifications	3
Desired conditions	3
Project / activity specific input.....	3
2. Wildland Urban Interface.....	3
Project / activity specific input.....	3
3. Meadows	4
Desired conditions	4
4. Aquatic and Riparian Desired conditions.....	4
Project / activity specific input.....	4
5. Sustainable Recreation	4
Refinements.....	4
Desired conditions	4
Project / activity specific input.....	5
6. Other / Overarching.....	5
Conclusion / Major Themes.....	6

Introduction

The Sequoia National Forest (SNF) Public Workshop regarding the Forest Plan Revision preliminary “Need to Change” was held on January 28 at the DoubleTree Hotel in Bakersfield, CA. Based on sign-in records, at least twenty-six members of the public attended.

The meeting opened with a welcome from Western Divide District Ranger Rick Stevens on behalf of Sequoia Forest Supervisor Kevin Elliott, who could not attend the meeting due to a death in his family. The agenda included presentations, discussion, and questions and answers regarding Forest Plan Revision, the preliminary “Need to Change” document, desired conditions for the Forest, and the unique roles and contributions of the Forest. The presenters were members of the Regional Planning Team Deb Whitall, Acting Director of Planning for Forest Service Region 5; Jo Ann Fites-Kaufman, Ecologist, U.S. Forest Service; Mary Cole, Landscape Architect, Sequoia National Forest; and Mark Metcalfe, Economist, U.S. Forest Service. Members of the public were also provided with opportunities to interact with Regional and Sequoia Forest staff and each other during an “open house” and small group discussion tables. Meeting materials and presentations are posted to the Region 5 Planning website: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/r5/landmanagement/planning>.

The purpose of this report is to assemble public input received during the workshop, either verbally (as captured by staff note-takers) or on comment cards. Comments sent via email or post before or after the workshop will be assembled in a separate report.

This report was prepared by the Center for Collaborative Policy with the intent to neutrally categorize and summarize the input generated at the workshop.

Input by topic area

Input received at the Sequoia Public Workshop is organized by the 5 topic areas from the preliminary “Need to Change”, plus a category for “other / overarching” input. Within each section, comments are subdivided as either **refinements** to the Need to Change, **clarifications** of text in the Need to Change, “**missing**” from the Need to Change, statements of **desired conditions** for the Forest, or **project / activity specific input**. Subcategories in each topic area are only listed if input pertaining to that subcategory was received.

Two written comment cards were received at this meeting. Remarks from the comment cards are shown in quotation marks. All other input is derived from notes taken by Forest Service staff and the meeting facilitators.

1. *Vegetation, resilience, wildlife and fire*

Refinements

- “Diameter limits need to be lifted, they are tying the hands of professional foresters. Restoration of our forest can’t happen on a long term basis without some flexibility.”

Clarifications

- Need to define restoration and what it means – back to 1860? Before fire suppression in 19th century.

Desired conditions

- Want to see more fire that is managed for resource objectives. Study the McNally fire to see what a healthy forest/resilient area looks like and under what conditions they burned.
- Want the forest to be able to respond to climate change (resilient).
- People in the small group discussion like the mixed conifer example of desired conditions in the draft. Everyone at the table thought we should use that type of general approach without specifics. Keep the plan general/generic so you will not be litigated – stay away from specific numbers.
- Would like to see the SQF forest mimic natural processes that are always evolving and changing.
- Is the park service on board with this (vegetation and fire management philosophy)? They are managing things differently.
- Wilderness Act – keep wilderness the way it is.

Project / activity specific input

- Would like to see different fire restrictions based on elevation and fuel conditions instead of the whole forest.

2. *Wildland Urban Interface*

Project / activity specific input

- Want to see the USFS to provide input to county planning to limit urban development near the forest boundary. Make sure wild land fire concerns are addressed.

- Educate the public / home owners to make sure they are clearing / preparing their home or property to withstand wildfires. Help people understand defensible space and how fires burn.

3. *Meadows*

Desired conditions

- We should reduce grazing in the meadows.

4. *Aquatic and Riparian*

Desired conditions

- Roads should be decommissioned and fish barrier should be removed.

Project / activity specific input

- Top identified road spur that should be decommissioned. Trout Unlimited would like to help.
- Trails in Kern Canyon wilderness need clearing in wilderness, no clearance is allowed.

5. *Sustainable Recreation*

Refinements

- Would like to see public use allowed in condor habitat areas – evidence is that condors do well in urban areas. Sequoia National Forest has been placing restrictions on them.

Desired conditions

- Would like to see closures of dispersed camping areas.
- Recreation needs to be a priority, both to maintain and to develop new opportunities.
- While encouraging more diverse use, we can't maintain what we have. Trail management requires money. If you can't manage it, downsize. Don't expand what you can't maintain.
- Support for camps and working with at-risk kids. How can kids learn to appreciate and take care of the land/connect to land? "Kids in the woods" programs and work programs.
- Teach kids to work with pack stock. Encourage pack and stock animal use the forest. Don't want to close that. We want kids to learn and be interested in this.

Project / activity specific input

- Would like to see the roads closed only when the roads are too wet instead of seasonal closures – this year is dry and there is no snow on the roads.
- Would like to see trails open in the winter on the Kern River Ranger District.
- Need more public education re: trash.
- Trails in the Golden Trout Wilderness are in awful shape. Use is concentrated because we can't reach farther out. Won't let us go in with chainsaws (in wilderness) to clear trails. We have volunteer groups who will do this. If we could just clear the trails, we could disperse the use quickly. It doesn't make sense. We have inclination, money, and people to do this for you.
- Use solar at your facilities?

6. Other / Overarching

- Need to be consistent rules/regulations for the public to follow as they travel in the Golden Trout Wilderness between Sequoia National Forest, Inyo National Forest, and the Sequoia Kings Canyon National Park. National Park Service regulations are so different from Forest Service, which makes it tough for anyone crossing jurisdictions in back country.
- The Sierra and Inyo allow things that the Sequoia doesn't. Need more consistency.
- Want to see more monitoring and make sure you have money to monitor.
- Need to integrate the road and wilderness plan with the Forest Plan and present them together. Can't really do it separately.
- "The Forest Service 'needs to change' presentation needs to have the following: ROS (recreation opportunities spectrum) poster - display it, show it, educate people. Ask Inyo folks if they have one. Sequoia map. Demographics map. Visitor use card."
- Members of the public need to know that the biggest difference between the objection period and the previous appeal process is that in order to raise an objection you have to have previously submitted a formal comment during a prior public comment period. This will give you standing to object.

- Field trips, walking the land – makes a difference to help make the plan work.
- With the Renewable Energy Act, a percent of profits come back to Forest Service, etc. to maintain natural areas. We would like more money to come to the agency. Funds may be available from wind farms through trout.
- Common themes – public outreach and partnerships

Conclusion / Major Themes

Attendees at this Sequoia Public Workshop provided numerous specific suggests at both a Forest Plan level and a project / activity specific level. A key theme for this Forest is coordination and consistency (where possible) across boundaries, considering that the Forest borders diverse public lands and includes portions of a popular wilderness area that stretches across two National Forests and one National Park. Another key theme for the Sequoia, as for other Forests, is the reality of shrinking federal budgets, which increases the need for realistic management objectives, partnerships, and growing the base of supportive members of the public.